



Habitat is where it's at!

April 2016



We hope you enjoy reading about the adventures of the **Green River Region** personnel as they work to *Conserve Wildlife and Serve People!*

Special dates and points of interest:

- APRIL 15 IS THE LAST DAY TO MODIFY OR WITHDRAW APPLICATIONS FOR MOOSE, BIGHORN SHEEP, MOUNTAIN GOAT AND BISON.
- PUBLIC MEETINGS ON HERD OBJECTIVES FOR LINCOLN MOOSE, SUBLETTE PRONGHORN ANTELOPE AND WYOMING RANGE MULE DEER IN KEMMERER, APRIL 27, AT THE SOUTH LINCOLN TRAINING AND EVENTS CENTER AND GREEN RIVER, APRIL 28, AT THE GREEN RIVER GAME AND FISH OFFICE; BOTH MEETINGS START AT 7 PM.
- FISH REGULATION PUBLIC MEETINGS MAY 2, EVANSTON, BEAR CENTER PAVILION, 6 PM; MAY 3, GREEN RIVER, GAME AND FISH OFFICE, 6 PM; MAY 5, BAGGS, VALLEY COMMUNITY CENTER, 6 PM.
- REMEMBER: YOU CAN BUY ALL YOUR HUNTING LICENSES, REQUIRED STAMPS AND MANY MORE PRODUCTS AT THE WGFD WEBSITE FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN COMPUTER!



Baggs Game Warden Kim Olson photographed what she described as a “*traffic jam in Baggs*” the end of March. (*photo, left top*) Wyoming was slammed with a winter storm the end of March, with some locations receiving over a foot of the white stuff. Areas in southwest Wyoming received snowfall anywhere from four inches to a foot or more in the mountains. Wildlife managers will know how local deer populations were affected by winter when they conduct mule deer mortality surveys in May.

The rock formations are gorgeous along Flaming Gorge Reservoir with a dusting of snow. The snow made for bad driving conditions, but good for photographers! (*photo left*)

~Mountain lion research ~ local personnel working with Large Carnivore Section~



Green River Wildlife Biologist Patrick Burke, Green River Game Warden Andy Roosa, and WGFD Large Carnivore Biologists Luke Ellsbury and Justin Clapp have been working south of Rock Springs doing mountain lion research.

"The goal of this project was to evaluate the applicability of using forward-looking infrared from aircraft at night to detect mountain lions, since we currently don't have an effective method to survey for them," Burke said. "At least, we don't have a way that isn't super labor intensive and expensive, right now. We didn't get enough cats collared this winter to try the technique out, but if we can get a better sample size next winter, that is the plan."

This nine-year old 130 pound female was fitted with a GPS collar that will allow biologists to track her movements. In addition to fitting her with a GPS collar, biologists collected blood and DNA samples, took body measurements, estimated age from tooth wear, measured vital signs, and marked her with a lip tattoo and ear tags to show that she had been captured after the collar eventually falls off. Efforts to collar more mountain lions in this area are ongoing.

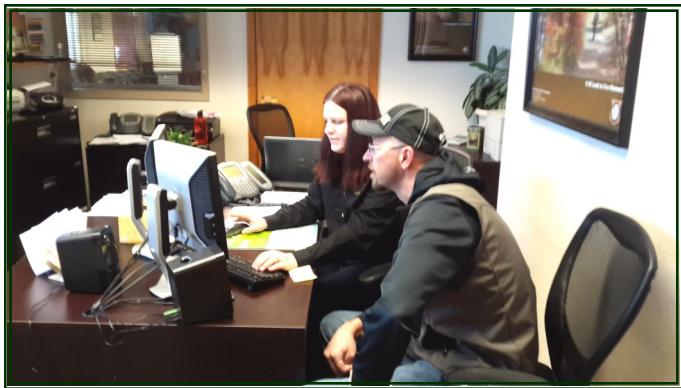
Photos top to bottom:

*Female mountain lion; Justin Clapp (left) Patrick Burke (center) and Luke Ellsbury take biological information; Andy Roosa (left) and Justin Clapp (right) and a close up of the lion's teeth. Tooth condition is an accurate way to determine the age of a mountain lion. *photos compliments of Andy Roosa and Patrick Burke.*

~Bear bait site registrations up in the region ~ Don't forget to pick up the 2016 bear hunting reg's~



Sheila Watts registers a bait site.



Regina Dickson registers a bait site.



A black bear hunter from southwest Wyoming provided this photo he took from his trail camera in 2012.

Office managers Sheila Watts and Regina Dickson were very busy April Fool's Day registering bear baits-no fooling! "We registered roughly 67 people, most of them registering two bait sites, on April 1st, making it about 134 bait sites registered; the most we have had in a couple of years," Watts said.

Bear hunters were waiting in the parking lot as early as 6:30 a.m. and when the doors opened for business at 8 a.m., the crowd gathered at the front counter. Region Information and Education Specialist Lucy Wold sold licenses and Green River Region Wildlife Supervisor Steve DeCecco manned the phone so the bear bait registration could go smoothly and fairly-quickly.

Bear hunters have a preference period of March 1 through March 20 of each year to register the same bait site they had registered in the previous calendar year. There are no bear bait registrations during the period of March 21 through March 31. Beginning April 1, bear baits may be registered on a first come, first served basis.

Black bear hunt areas in the Green River region include areas 9,10, 11, 12, and a portion of 35. There is a spring and fall hunting season and an archery and general season. Hunting seasons close when the season ends or the annual female mortality quota is reached; whichever comes first. Bear hunters are required to call the Black Bear Mortality Limit Hotline at 1-800-264-1280 before going hunting to determine which hunt areas are still open.

The archery season opens April 15 and the general season opens May 1. Bear hunters should pick up a free copy of the 2016 black bear hunting season regulations at any regional office of the Game and Fish or most license vendors.

~The 22nd Annual Living in Large Carnivore Seminar held in Baggs this year~



Brian DeBolt (center) and Dusty Lasseter (right) help seminar participants learn how to use inert pepper spray on a black bear target.



Dusty Lasseter helps a young participant shoot the bear target. (left) Dusty talks about gray wolves. (below, left)



Large Carnivore Conflict Coordinator Brian DeBolt and Bear-Wise Coordinator Dustin Lasseter helped people in the Baggs/Rawlins area learn how to safely recreate in large carnivore country on April 7. The folks at the Carbon County Higher Education Center hosted the event for some 37 people.

The purpose of this seminar is to help people enjoy recreating in areas where there are large carnivores and to be safe in the back-country and at home. The annual seminar aims to increase awareness and understanding of bears, mountain lions, and wolves by providing participants with current information and tools they can use to prevent conflicts and avoid dangerous encounters.

DeBolt and Lasseter presented information on black bear, grizzly bear, and mountain lion behavior and biology, bear and lion life history, population status and movements, proper food storage, encounters and what to do in an encounter situation, safety and legal issues, and the most current information on the use of pepper spray. A small portion of the seminar discussed wolf biology and interactions with pets.

A huge thanks to the "large carnivore boys" and Christy Stocks and her staff at the Carbon County Higher Education Center for the great seminar in Baggs.



Brian DeBolt helps students learn about bear/lion skulls.

~Grizzly bear public meetings ~



In early April, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department held public meetings around the state to receive input on how Wyoming should manage *grizzly bears* when they come off of the endangered species list. Some 20 people attended the Green River meeting on April 6.

Chief Game Warden Brian Nesvik (photo left, top and bottom) and Large Carnivore Section Supervisor Dan Thompson (photo left, center), presented the history of grizzly bear conservation and information about the criteria for the bears' protection. The public was able to comment online, at public meetings around the state, or by regular mail.

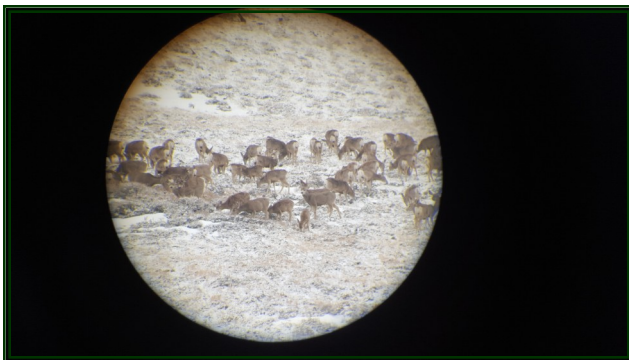
The United States Fish and Wildlife Service filed a proposed rule for removing grizzly bears from the endangered species list in Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho on March 11, 2016. The grizzly bear was first listed as threatened in 1975. The WGFD proposal lays out a path to ensure grizzly bears remain recovered. The plan also honors the commitment made by the people of Wyoming over the last three decades to help recover this species with an investment of \$40 million.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has also released the draft three-state Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The public comments on both the draft MOA and the draft Grizzly Bear Management Plan will be considered before a presentation and recommendations are made to the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission.

The draft Grizzly Bear Management Plan is adaptive to make sure that the newest and best available science can be quickly applied to grizzly bear conservation in Wyoming. Wyoming will continue to collaborate with experts from other states, federal agencies and tribes to build on this amazing conservation success story.



It is illegal to pick up any shed antlers or horns west of the Continental Divide January 1 through April 30 of each year.



Enforcement Happenings

There are unsolved poaching cases in the Green River Region. If you have any information about any wildlife violation please contact your local game warden or the **STOP Poaching Hotline** at:

1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847)

- You can also report a wildlife violation at the WGFD website
<http://wgfd.wyo.gov>

Kemmerer Game Warden Chris Baird spent much of March patrolling winter ranges, investigating reported and discovered violations of antler collection and/or winter range closure violations. Baird responded to a report involving someone entering a winter range closure in a remote area late at night. "The investigation revealed that suspects had used an acetylene torch to cut the lock off of a gate clearly marked with two signs prohibiting motorized travel during the seasonal closure," Baird said.

"Tracks showed the two suspects had driven into the winter range closure until snowdrifts prohibited further travel, at which point the suspects stopped and built a bonfire in the middle of the road which was left burning well after they had left. I contacted the suspects immediately after they had left the closure and they lied to me about the violation and about one of their identities."

"The following day I learned the driver of the vehicle was wanted on several charges, including narcotics and stolen property," Baird said. "Additionally, this suspect was driving on a suspended license and was in violation of probation not only by committing the violations I observed, but also by consuming alcohol and driving a vehicle that was not fitted with a blood alcohol sensor. I coordinated with several agencies to affect the arrest of the suspect driving the vehicle."

"While attempting to relocate the suspect, I stopped at local café to eat lunch and, while talking to a fellow officer on the phone on how to relocate the suspects, both of them walked into the same café and sat down across from me. I finished my lunch, contacted Kemmerer Police Department, and made the arrest outside of the café. In addition to the drivers previously mentioned troubles, both suspects admitted to and were charged by the BLM for violations of the winter range closure, destruction of property, and leaving a campfire unattended."

"These winter range violations occurred in critical big game winter range where I had recently observed nearly 200 mule deer and around 50 elk wintering within sight of where the suspects had violated the motorized vehicle closure left the fire burning." (Two center photos, Chris Baird)

~Two new game wardens for southwest Wyoming~ Welcome back sage grouse!



Photos: Green River Game Warden Andy Roosa.

The Green River Region is pleased to welcome two new game wardens to southwest Wyoming. Rob Shipe (photo left, on the right) and Justin Dodd (left).

Shipe grew up in southeast Michigan and spent a lot of time fishing and recreating on the many lakes and streams out there. In 2013, he graduated from Oakland University in Rochester, MI, with a degree in biology. Shipe spent two summers working for the Game and Fish as an Aquatic Invasive Species technician, working on Flaming Gorge Reservoir. "In those two summers, I have fallen in love with the state of Wyoming and its fishing and wildlife resources," Shipe said. "I became a game warden to protect those resources for future generations."

Justin Dodd is from Peoria, Arizona. Dodd received a Bachelor's in Forestry/Biology/Wildlife Management and Ecology at Northern Arizona University. Dodd also worked several years as a life-guard and received an Army ROTC Scholarship. He was commissioned into the U.S. Army National Guard as a second lieutenant in May of 2015.

Dodd also worked as a volunteer doing Chronic Wasting Disease sampling in the Kaibab National Forest and radio telemetry locating tortoises. Both Dodd and Shipe received their Basic Peace Officer Certification at the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy in March of 2016.

Dodd and Shipe will be spending a lot of time working on Flaming Gorge Reservoir, doing watercraft and fishing enforcement and watercraft safety outreach and education. In the late summer and fall, their will focus will shift to wildlife regulation enforcement during the hunting seasons. Welcome Justin and Rob!

Green River Region personnel are out and about surveying sage grouse leks throughout April and May. Green River Wildlife Management Coordinator Mark Zornes says in general, bird numbers are up again this year, although the surveys are ongoing. Stay tuned! Please enjoy these majestic grouse from a distance with binoculars and or spotting scope.



Office managers Sheila Watts (left) and Regina Dickson (right) pose next to a new bear trap. The girls have been busy helping bear hunters register bait sites and processing watercraft registrations. They invite you to stop in and pick up your 2016 licenses and Conservation Stamps.

<http://wgfd.wyo.gov>
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~Critter Spotlight~

Beaver

By Mark Zornes a.k.a. Leopold

- **Unquestionably the most valuable furbearer in the history** of both the United States and Canada. Trade in and pursuit of beaver pelts contributed greatly to the formation and exploration of these countries and resulted in significant inter-tribal strife among indigenous peoples. Beaver numbers were greatly reduced due to centuries of fur trade, but have since returned to nearly all their native range and are considered a pest species in some areas. Beaver are very common in much of Wyoming.
- **Among rodents (order Rodentia)**, second only to the South American Capybara in size, adult beavers may weigh in excess of 85 pounds, but most are typically between 50-60 pounds.
- **Semi-aquatic, beaver are tied to water**, which they rely on for food, escape cover, and as a means of locomotion.
- **Beaver are nearly 100% vegetarians**, consuming animal matter only accidentally with vegetation. Those ignorant of the food habits of this species often report they eat fish, which has never been documented. Beaver feed primarily on the inner bark of woody species (like aspen and willows) and on succulent aquatic vegetation, such as cat-tail.
- **Beavers are the engineers of the animal kingdom**, famed for their dam building skills. Much more importantly, at least among biologists and others, they are renowned for their contribution to riparian habitat health, meadow creation, and forest composition influence. Many other wildlife species, both aquatic and terrestrial, rely on beaver influenced habitats to make a living.
- **Beaver build large huts or lodges of sticks, logs, other vegetation**, and mud or dig bank dens, both of which have entrances only reached under the water. This provides some level of protection for pairs, their yearling, and their newborn young. Beavers live in family groups that usually have both yearlings and newborns in the lodge. A beaver family complex tends to include five to eight individuals. Young males disperse farther afield when they leave the group, while females tend to occupy an adjacent home range. Dispersal can lead to increased rates of predation by bears, mountain lions, and coyotes.
- **Easily recognized by most people**, the beaver is covered in lush brownish-red fur, has large dark webbed feet and sports a large "hairless" flatted black tail used for propulsion, mud work, and as a signal to others of it's species. People that spend time near beaver colonies often hear the warning slap of a swimming beaver, a sound much like that made by throwing a cinder block in a pond.